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Newsweek



**The Road
From Selma**



At the capitol in Montgomery: 'We are on the move and no wave of racism can stop us'

Road From Selma: Hope—and Death

They started down U.S. 80 out of Selma on a Sunday clear as crystal, and they marched into Montgomery four days later in a warm spring rain. They arrived a nomad army, their feet blistered, their clothes mud-spattered, their faces sun-scorched, their ragtag column led by two flag-bearers and a one-legged man on crutches and a piper playing "Yankee Doodle" on a reedy fife. "Walk together, children, don't you get weary," Martin Luther King had told them as the trek began, "and it will lead you to the promised land." And if the marchers halted considerably short of that goal last week, they did bring off a protest demonstration unmatched in the history of the Negro revolt—a symbolic triumph that could not be undone by the tragedy that struck immediately in its aftermath.

In the city where the Confederacy was born, the trickle of 300 who made the 54-mile hike from Selma had swelled overnight to 25,000. Their presence alone was a victory. Up Dexter Avenue, where an occupying Union army marched a century ago, Federal troops marched again—this time conveying King's nonviolent soldiery. At the site of the Alabama capitol, where Jefferson Davis was sworn as Confederate President, a massed chorus assaulted the citadel of the bitter-enders with the hymn of revolution: "We Shall Overcome." And in the state's executive suite, where George Corley Wallace parted the Venetian blinds and peered out through binoculars, the nation's top Negro leaders peacefully petitioned him to mend his segregationist ways.

The marchers were not to leave Ala-

bama in peace. A few hours after they dispersed, a night-riding lynch party ambushed a Detroit volunteer rights worker, Mrs. Viola Gregg Liuzzo, 39, on U.S. 80 in swampy Lowndes County and shot her dead at the wheel of her car. Once again, a national racial crisis was reduced to the understandable terms of personal tragedy, as it had been when Medgar Evers was shot in Jackson, Miss., and when four Negro schoolgirls died in a bombing in Birmingham, and when the Rev. James Reeb was clubbed to death in Selma a bare two weeks before.

The night Viola Liuzzo died, a rights worker called her husband, Anthony, a Teamster business agent.

"Your wife has been shot," he said.



Viola Liuzzo, with Sally: 'Why?'

"Is it serious?" Liuzzo asked thickly. "No, it's critical."

There was a pause. Then the voice came back: "She's dead."

Liuzzo shrieked and hung up. He stayed up all that night; at 5 a.m., he put in a call to President Johnson. The President was sleeping, a White House guard said, could someone else help? "Who?" Liuzzo asked. "This is very important . . . My wife is lying on a slab in Montgomery. I'll only take a minute of his time." He didn't get through to LBJ—not just then. All he could do was try to explain Mrs. Liuzzo's death to their five kids, and still 6-year-old Sally wanted to know, "Why couldn't Mommy have just died from being old?" And then Liuzzo was alone with his anger: "The dirty rats!"

Next morning, an angry Lyndon Johnson went on nationwide TV to announce the arrest of four Ku Klux Klansmen as suspects—and to declare war on the Klan. To KKK members, he delivered "an appeal and a warning": get out now. To the nation, he promised to send a stiff anti-Klan bill to Congress—and he called for a Congressional probe of the KKK's "hooded society of bigots."

'Up From Darkness': At the gates to Wallace's segregationist fortress, down the street from the Baptist church where he began his spectacular civil-rights ministry a decade ago, Martin Luther King had delivered his own warning the day before. His sermon was a patchwork, laced with reworked passages from past talks, set almost mechanically to the rolling cadences of the Negro church. It didn't quite fire the crowd. But, in the setting, King's message was



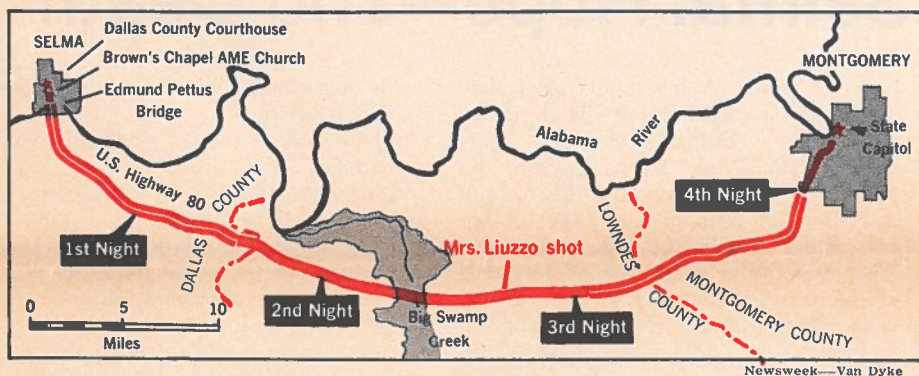
King's army: 'George, it's all over now'



Hecklers: 'Yankee Trash Go Home'



Footsore marchers: 'Don't get weary'



Highway 80: Five days' journey



Letherer: 'Left . . . left'



Tenting tonight: City of St. Jude



Photos by Associated Press, Vernon Merritt III—Black Star

Selma: 'Bye-Bye, Blackbird'

NATIONAL AFFAIRS

as remarkable as his march. He stood at the end of the road from Selma, a highway "often bloody, yet it has become a highway up from darkness." And he stood at the beginning of the new, uncharted road from Montgomery, and he could only promise to march on: "We do not intend to let the state return to normal. We will have a new Alabama. The only normalcy that is worthwhile is the normalcy that recognizes the decency of every man."

By the hard measure of concessions won, King's marchers accomplished nothing at all. As a voting-rights protest, the trip was scarcely necessary. King's legions had made their point in an earlier attempt three weeks ago, when Wallace's state troopers beat them back with billies and tear gas. That rout—and the subsequent murder of Reeb—made it all but certain that Congress would swiftly pass a measure enfranchising Negroes across the Deep South; the principal quarrel on Capitol Hill last week was not whether the bill should pass but whether it should be made broader and tougher still. With that victory in reach, petitioning Wallace to enfranchise the Negroes before the U.S. did was merely quixotic; the governor refused even to see a committee of the petitioners. And the long, tough task that lay ahead—registering Negroes once the doors were opened—was not the sort that could be approached by protest parades.

Ex Post Facto: Yet, for the apostles of The Movement, the march had become an end in itself, an ex post facto assertion of the *right* to demonstrate even after the prime objective—the right to vote—was virtually assured.

Getting the show on the road was a minor miracle. When a Federal court order permitting the march came down a bare four days before, its director Hosea Williams, had not yet begun to grapple with the tangle of logistical requirements to sustain it. "All I had," he confessed later, "was four latrines on a truck and three cases of eggs bought three weeks ago." So he started jotting bare-minimum necessities on a yellow legal pad ("food and water supply . . . places to spend the night . . . communications"), then rounded up a small executive committee.

Somehow, the pieces fell into place. A "loaves and fishes" committee dominated by out-of-town clergymen rounded up donated cases of food; the ladies of Selma's Negro First Baptist Church cooked it and sent it off to the marchers in shiny-new, steamy garbage pails. A campsite committee coursed U.S. 80 looking for Negroes willing to let the marchers pitch their four big, rented tents overnight. Others rounded up more than 50 support vehicles—among them five latrine trucks, a 600-

gallon water truck, a mobile clinic, a half-dozen ambulances, rubbish pickup trucks, and a fleet of command cars.

'No More': In a growing stream, the marchers assembled in Selma. The men, women, and children who had followed King into the streets—and into jail—all through the campaign were ready to walk again. And outsiders flocked to his call: clerics and nuns, pert coeds and hot-eyed student rebels, VIP's like the U.N.'s Ralph Bunche and anonymous farmhands from the Southwest Alabama cattle, corn, and cotton country. A blind man came from Atlanta, a one-legged man from Saginaw, Mich. An Episcopal minister from Minneapolis got plane fare from a parishioner and took the gift to be a sign from God that he should make the pilgrimage. And a little Selma Negro girl tagged along "for freedom and justice and so the troopers can't hit us no more."

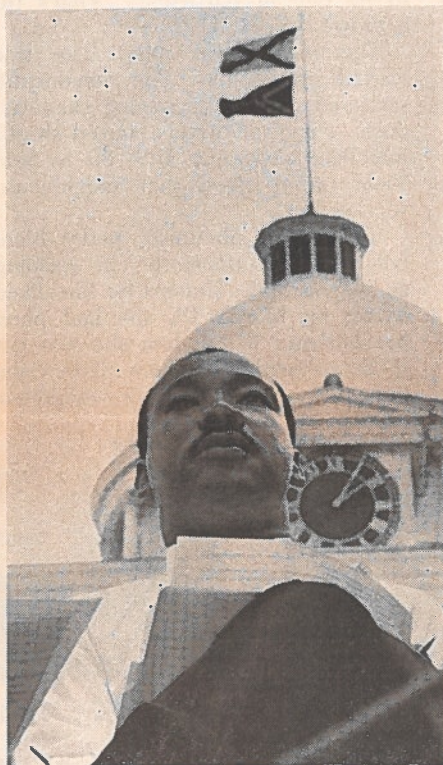
Federal troops came, too. From the first Sunday step-off, the route was alive with combat-clad soldiers, spaced out at key points with fixed (but sheathed) bayonets, scuttling about in jeeps and lorries, hiking at either flank of the parade, prowling the piney undergrowth in scouting forays. Helicopters clattered low over the marchers. A Justice Department task force headed by Deputy Attorney General Ramsey Clark maneuvered its field contingent—some 150 FBI agents and U.S. marshals—from a commandeered headquarters in Selma's Federal Building. John Doar, Justice's crisis-toughened civil-rights chief (page 27), kept in touch from the highway. Until the killers struck the night the march ended, however, there was little for the Federal forces to do but stand watch.

King's army set out 3,200 strong on the first 7-mile leg. Under the winter-bare chinaberry trees outside Brown's Chapel AME Church in Selma, King's top lieutenant, the Rev. Ralph Abernathy, looked down the road through rose-colored glasses: "When we get to Montgomery, we are going to go up to Governor Wallace's door and say, 'George, it's all over now, we've got the ballot.'" Then he called for King, bundled in warm woollens and a Ridgway cap against the 40ish chill. And the leader set the messianic keynote: "Because of the system, we don't have much education, and some of us don't know how to make our nouns and verbs agree. But thank God we have our bodies, our feet, and our souls."

Open Road: Briskly, with King up front, the mile-long caravan of marchers, troops, newsmen, and curious Alabamians swung out of town to Edmund Pettus Bridge—the site of the bloody March 7 rout. But this time the road lay open before them. On a Selma street corner, Sheriff Jim Clark stood hardly noticed,

his "NEVER" button still flashing defiantly on his lapel. The state troopers this time were helping direct traffic. Only a few whites turned out to see the marchers off. Some stood by the roadside heckling; a record-store loudspeaker blared "Bye-Bye, Blackbird"; a few spectators from Mississippi cruised by in cars ornamented with signs that said, "Veterans of Oxford," and "Yankee Trash Go Home." But more common were the groups of Negroes who clustered at the dusty crossroads to smile and wave and cheer.

That first night, most of the marchers were shuttled back to Selma in trains; a hard-core 350 camped out in a farm field, wolfing spaghetti suppers, nesting in blankets and sleeping bags under the



Vernon Merritt III—Black Star

King in Montgomery: 'Keep going'

big tents in sub-freezing cold. Outside, soldiers stood watch, huddling around campfires that lit the Alabama night with a red-orange glow.

Next morning, the column was thinned out again to 300—the maximum permitted under the court order along a stretch of highway narrowed from four blacktop lanes to two. And the 300 marched on, 16 miles under a punishing sun on the second day, 11 miles in a torrential downpour on the third, 16 miles into Montgomery in balmy spring weather—and a sudden cloudburst—on the fourth. Their way led through flat farmlands and new-green pastures, stubbly cotton patches and freshly harrowed red fields, piney thickets and ghostly swamps where the narrow highway

sheered off 15 or 20 feet into clumps of trees festooned with Spanish moss.

They were a motley tribe, in denims and khakis and clerical black, marching boots and bare feet, toggle coats and makeshift ponchos cut out of bath towels and sheets of plastic. Sometimes they passed little groups of hecklers, who seemed to take particular delight in whooping obscenities at the nuns or counting cadence for one-legged Jim Letherer: "Left . . . left . . . left." Once, a light plane showered them with racist leaflets. But where they walked, they worked changes in the racial climate. Groups of Negroes watched them pass. Some were too frightened to join. "If we marched," said a 52-year-old farmhand outside a weathered shack, "we'd have to move." But the second day out, Frank Harrison, a 62-year-old Tricem Negro, creaked out with a cane and told the pilgrims: "I just wanted to walk one mile with y'all." He walked three, to the next campsite, and there he rested and said: "I been called a little boy long enough, don't you think?"

And through it all ran the mystical presence of Martin Luther King, a presence as real when he took a day and a half off to keep a speaking date in Cleveland as when he marched at the head of the column. His line officers handled the details; King instead was a living icon, to be displayed at the head of the march, to reassure the marchers that they were making history, to be introduced by apostle Abernathy to the wayside groups of Negroes as a latter-day Moses chosen by God to lead his people out of the wilderness.

Cloudburst: And finally, on the fourth day, as they strode down the widened, four-lane stretch of highway into the cradle of the Confederacy, their numbers began to swell again, from 300 to 1,500. The cloudburst struck just as they crossed the city limits, but they broke into a jubilant chorus of "We Shall Overcome." That night, they camped in the City of St. Jude, a Catholic church, school, and hospital complex on the edge of town. Harry Belafonte came down with a troupe of celebrities to perform on a stage jerry-built on borrowed coffin crates.

And then, on a muggy Thursday afternoon, they spilled in a climactic wave, 25,000 strong, to the door of the colon-naded capitol. On the dome high above, the flags of the Confederacy and of Alabama fluttered in the breeze; the U.S. flag snapped from its own staff on one side. On the portico, State House workers laid sheets of plywood over the gold star marking the spot where Jeff Davis took his oath—a shield assuring that no demonstrator's foot would sully that hallowed ground.

And inside Wallace watched through his borrowed binoculars. He and his

counselors had spent the week debating how to meet the invasion; he seriously considered shutting down the State House entirely, then took the halfway measure of giving women employees—about 85 per cent of the payroll—the day off. Wallace himself made daily pleas to Alabamians to stay away. On demonstration day, under heavy pressure, he agreed at one point to meet an Alabama-only committee of petitioners once the rally broke up. But, in the end, he reneged; an aide met the rights delegation 10 feet inside the door and told them the governor had gone home. They left, still clutching the petition.

Battle Cry: Yet Wallace could scarcely have missed the meaning of the event. The huge throng sang its songs and bellowed its nonviolent battle cry: "Freedom!" One after another, the top leaders of the civil-rights movement warmed up the crowd for King's peroration. At the end, King took the platform, lining out the speech that was half sermon, half pep talk.

He stood on the back of a flat-bed trailer, and, if he was persona non grata in the State House, his words could not be shut out. "Today," he cried, "I want to say to the people of America and the nations of the world: we are not about to turn around. We are on the move now. Yes, we are on the move and no wave of racism can stop us . . . We are on the move now . . . [and] not even the

marching of mighty armies can halt us."

"Let us march," he boomed, "on segregated schools . . . on poverty . . . on ballot boxes, until all over Alabama, God's children will be able to walk the earth in decency and honor. For all of us today, the battle is in our hands. The road ahead is not altogether a smooth one. There are no broad highways to lead us easily and inevitably to quick solutions. We must keep going!"

The crowd response reached into Wallace's secluded vantage point. Around him, aides and friends cracked dour jokes. "An inauguration crowd," said one, "may look like that in a few years if the voting-rights bill passes." Wallace chuckled. But once, he peered down through his blinds at the throng in Dexter Avenue, and he acknowledged to no one in particular, "That's quite a crowd."

The march was over. The troops started pulling out. The demonstrators scattered. In the deepening shadows of dusk, a pool of drivers started shuttling marchers back over U.S. 80 to Selma. Viola Liuzzo drew that assignment; it was her last.

She was a plumpish, perky blonde, belatedly a sophomore (in sociology) at Wayne State University. She liked a cause; on March 16, she had phoned her husband to tell him she was going to Selma with a Wayne State delegation. "She asked me to understand,"

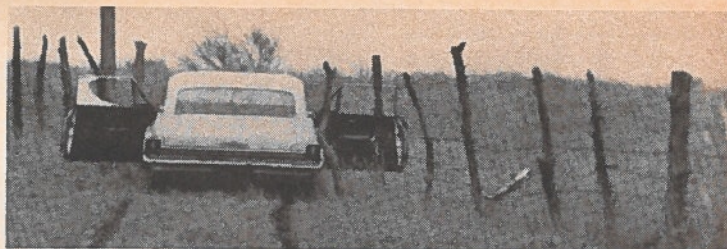
Liuzzo recalled last week. "I tried to discourage her, but she said, 'No, we've got to go.' I guess I had a premonition of trouble. I had a feeling. I told one of the boys, 'March isn't over, there's more bad things left in the month.'"

She volunteered for the transportation committee. After the march, she ferried one carload of marchers to Selma; on the way, a car tagged briefly behind her, jolted her back bumper, and nearly rocked her off the road. From Selma, she headed back to Montgomery along U.S. 80 to pick up more marchers, with a 19-year-old Selma Negro rights worker, Leroy Moton, riding at her side. Near the edge of Lowndes County's moss-hung Big Swamp, on a slight curve, two cars swept past them. Gunfire split the night silence, but, in the numbing aftermath, Moton couldn't remember hearing it. Mrs. Liuzzo fell sideways, blood spurting from a head wound.

Flight: Moton clawed at the wheel, but the car lurched off the highway into a barbed-wire fence. Down the road, Moton saw one of the autos turn back. He slumped forward, pretending to be dead. The car pulled up; a flashlight played into the windows of Mrs. Liuzzo's auto; then the night-riders drove off. Moton plunged down the desolate highway on foot, wildly flagging for help from passing cars. One tried to run him down; he dived into a



Cover-up: Klansman Rowe



Death car: 'Their purposes cannot stand the light of day'



Associated Press, UPI photos

In a lightning-swift roundup, the FBI brings in Eaton (photo, left), Thomas (center), and Wilkins (right)

gully. Finally a pickup truck stopped and drove him back to Selma.

FBI agents worked all night, prowling the highway, examining witnesses, and, presumably, questioning their informants within the well-infiltrated KKK. By 12:40 p.m. Mr. Johnson was ready to go on TV. "We come now," he said, "to talk about a tragedy and a stain on our society." And then, with J. Edgar Hoover and Nicholas Katzenbach standing stolidly at his side, he announced the arrest of four Birmingham-area Klansmen on Federal conspiracy charges. (The four: Eugene Thomas, 43, a steelworker; Gary Thomas Rowe, 31 and unemployed; William Orville Eaton, 41, a former steelworker on disability retirement, and Collie Leroy Wilkins Jr., 21, a mechanic.)

Rope and Gun: Mrs. Liuzzo, he said, was "murdered by the enemies of justice, who for decades have used the rope and the gun, the tar and the feathers to terrorize their neighbors. They struck by night . . . for their purposes cannot stand the light of day." Now he was fighting mad at the Klan, "because I know their loyalty is not to the U.S. but to a hooded society of bigots." He mounted his instant three-pronged attack: anti-Klan legislation, exposure, and the direct ultimatum to Klansmen to quit "before it is too late."

In death, Viola Liuzzo dramatized the meaning of the march from Selma, a meaning that had seemed blurred till then in the rush of events. For all the victories in hand, protest marchers would not stop tramping the streets and highways of the U.S. The Movement was not precisely certain where to take them, but there was too much unfinished business—and, after Selma, too much momentum—to stop. Not all the marches would be wise or well-disciplined. But the march—and the outraged reaction to Viola Liuzzo's death on the road from Selma—made plainer than ever the nation's expanding commitment to the right of oppressed people to protest their lot.

Later that day the President returned Liuzzo's phone call. He told Liuzzo he had been up much of the night; he said the government was going all out on the case and on its war on the Klan. Tired, haggard, sleepless, Anthony Liuzzo held his white princess phone and said: "Thank you, Mr. President."

Honest Broker

His shoes were still caked with the mud of the Jefferson Davis Highway, his face reddened by the sun from the five-day trek, his slouch testified to his bone-weariness. But now the big parade was over—safely, it seemed—and John Doar was relaxing over a late steak dinner at Montgomery's Elite Café. Sud-



LBJ, with Hoover and Katzenbach: War on the Klan

denly, a drawly voice, quietly insistent, echoed over the restaurant's public-address system: "John Doar—telephone!" When he returned to his table companions five minutes later, Doar was wearing that look of preoccupation friends call his "crisis face." It was grimly appropriate. "One of the demonstrators was killed on the Selma highway," he reported. "Shot with a rifle."

A pragmatic veteran of the Southern wars, Doar, 43—the Justice Department's rumpled, rangy Johnny on the spot in Dixie—knew better than to blame himself for the martyr's death of Mrs. Viola Liuzzo. Still, the sniper's shot had struck close to home. All week, Assistant Attorney General Doar had symbolized the Federal presence in Alabama. Now, as he loped the two deserted blocks from the Elite to the Federal Building, the triumphal march had turned into another racial murder investigation.

Violence has been part of the chemistry of Doar's life since 1960, when he

joined the Justice Department's fledgling Civil Rights Division. Within a year, he was on duty in Montgomery watching helplessly as a white mob brutalized the first Freedom Riders. Later, when James Meredith was admitted to the University of Mississippi, Doar shared his campus room, and risked his life three times to dash through the frenzied rioters to reach besieged Federal marshals at the Lyceum. He was on scene during the turmoil at Albany, Ga., at Tuscaloosa, Tuskegee, and Birmingham, in McComb, Miss., and in Jackson, where, in a stunning display of courage, he braved a hail of bricks and bottles to avert a massacre of rioting Negroes by police after the funeral of Medgar Evers.

Officially, Doar was on hand last week to make certain that the Federal court order sanctioning the march to Montgomery was obeyed. In fact, he acted as honest broker between the Negroes, Alabama authorities, and the federalized National Guardsmen mustered to protect the marchers. He made it look easy—but only because he had worked so hard for so long winning the confidence of all sides.

Helping Hand: Doar seemed to be everywhere during the march. Once, spotting one-legged social worker Jim Letherer falling behind the pace on his crutches, Doar fell in beside him for a moment, and invited him over to the side of the road for a chat. He let Letherer catch his breath until the column had negotiated a difficult hill, then hailed a government car, and drove the handicapped man back to his original place in the march, his pride intact. On Tuesday, he tramped the entire 11 miles with the caravan—through a blinding rainstorm that plastered the hair to his skull, but never broke his stride. That night, without even changing his damp clothes, he flew to New Orleans and



Vernon Merritt III—Black Star

Marcher Doar: Realistic idealism

stayed up long past midnight preparing his arguments for a court hearing next morning on a 1963 Selma voting case.

Back with the marchers next day, he patrolled the ragged column from his green and white radio car (call number 222), touching base with the small army of other Federal men he supervised, military brass, and his boss in Washington, Attorney General Nicholas deB. Katzenbach, who had turned his own cavernous office into a command post.

Finally, at the weekend, Doar reluctantly consented to fly back to Washington—but only after the FBI had collared four suspects in the highway murder, and Katzenbach ordered him home for a rest. Doar's determination to stick to his post was characteristic. Indeed, behind his headlined exploits have been uncounted hours of missionary work in the South that have won him an unmatched reputation for grit, savvy, and integrity among Negro firebrands and hard-shell segregationists alike.

Fixture: On the road nearly half the time (178 days last year alone), Doar's husky figure (6 feet 2 inches, 186 pounds), youthful John Wayne face, and laconic, sleepy-eyed manner have become a fixture in Southern courtrooms and backwoods Negro shacks. Newsmen on the trail of obscure racial stories often find that Doar has beaten them to town (and checked into the least pretentious hostelry in sight). In court—Doar has argued 38 government voting-registration cases—he sometimes looks a shambles: jacket off, sleeves rolled loosely to the forearm, hands stuffed in back pockets, a long yellow pencil stuck eraser-first into his mouth like a cigarette.

But when his chance comes to cross-examine, he is straightforward and unshakable—and he gets results.

"I don't like what he's doing, but I've got to admit that son of a bitch is sharp," says a Greenwood, Miss., seg. John Lewis of the ultramilitant Student Non-violent Coordinating Committee concedes: "I think perhaps John Doar is one of the most effective men in the whole department." And a Justice Department associate adds admiringly: "John cuts square corners."

Conscience: Doar himself is loath to make his own case. "I feel better if I take some interest in seeing that people are treated better," is about all he'll say. "I guess that's just what you call conscience." At heart, he seems driven by that rare kind of realistic idealism that epitomized the New Frontier at its best. (Actually, Doar is a Wisconsin-bred Republican, Princeton '44, the son of a well-to-do, small-town lawyer who joined Justice near the end of the Eisenhower era and stayed on under John F. Kennedy and Lyndon Johnson.)

His work has exposed him to danger, and kept him from his attractive wife, Anne, and their four children. (The youngest, born while daddy was on crisis call in Birmingham, is named for Burke Marshall, Doar's predecessor as head of the civil rights division.) And some colleagues expect Doar will eventually migrate to the more tranquil world of politics. But Katzenbach and others doubt he'll stray from the law or civil rights. "He's not just interested in the Negro as a cause," says Marshall. "John likes Mrs. Steptoe and Jesse Turner and the rest." The feeling is mutual.

THE CONGRESS:

Medicoup

Bitterly fought by the American Medical Association, branded the forerunner of "socialized medicine," shelved by Congress for eight years, medicare became a virtual certainty last week.

Emerging from behind the doors of the House Ways and Means Committee room, committee chairman Wilbur D. Mills of Arkansas, once an archenemy of health insurance for the elderly under social security, happily signaled its inevitability. "The committee has voted," he told waiting newsmen as he walked briskly into the Capitol corridor, "to instruct me to introduce this bill at noon tomorrow." The medicare bill, reporters were later advised, would provide the biggest and costliest welfare program since social security itself began 30 years ago; it would cost \$6 billion a year when fully effective in 1967 and would raise the maximum social-security payroll bite from \$174 to \$252 by then. On straight party lines, the committee had approved it, 17 to 8.

A measure huge in scope and complexity, the bill is aimed to please all of the people some of the time. Its major elements:

- The "basic plan," a compulsory old-age medical-insurance program. It calls for a social-security payroll tax to finance up to 60 days of hospitalization and at least twenty additional days of nursing home care for each illness of people over 65.
- An additional voluntary insurance program—originally championed as an alternative to the compulsory plan by the committee's ranking Republican John W. Byrnes of Wisconsin. This program would permit anyone over 65 to contribute \$3 a month, to be matched by the Treasury, for coverage of 80 per cent of doctors' costs above \$50.
- Modifications of existing Federal-state medical-welfare programs—set up under the five-year-old Kerr-Mills Act—in order to liberalize means tests for prospective participants.
- An increase in social-security retirement benefits, boosting the individual minimum from \$40 a month to \$44, the maximum from \$127 to \$135.90.
- Increased benefits in several existing programs—such as aid to the blind, dependent children, and the disabled.

How had the long-resisted program at last slipped through Ways and Means, the major obstacle to medicare in the past? Some saw the persuasive hand of Lyndon Johnson, but others suspected that the politically sensitive nose of Wilbur Mills, sniffing the winds of Congressional change, made the difference. Following the 38-seat gain by Democrats last November, Mills counted



St. Louis Post-Dispatch

FOR THE BIRDS: With a swirl of 20 million wings and the shrill screams of 10 million beaked mouths, the birds move in on Dexter, Mo. (population: 5,519). For five winters, huge flocks of starlings and blackbirds have jammed a woods five blocks from the center of town. They devour 2.5 million pounds of grain each day. They invade barns looking for food. They chase pigs from feed troughs. More ominously, their droppings threaten Dexter with histoplasmosis, a tuberculosis-like lung disease. Frightened citizens talk of asking the Army to kill the birds with concussion bombs.